

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Thursday, November 19, 2009

WIC Program Offers Updated Food Choices for Wyoming Moms

Food choices offered by the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) have been modernized to provide improved options for the program's clients in Wyoming.

According to Janet Moran, WIC program section chief with the Wyoming Department of Health, the food choices offered to WIC participants were updated October 1 to help promote long-term breastfeeding and other current infant feeding practices, to support a greater variety of healthy food choices and to recognize cultural differences.

"WIC works to protect the health of low-income women, infants and children by providing nutritious foods and educating families about healthy eating," Moran said. WIC also provides lactation support to breastfeeding women and their infants and promotes childhood immunizations.

The "Wyoming WIC EBT System Today" (WYO W.E.S.T) system allows three months of participant benefits to be saved to the smart chip on the participant's card at a WIC office. WYO W.E.S.T. benefits can be redeemed at any Wyoming full-service grocery store that accepts WIC, and coupons or store loyalty cards can be applied to the purchase of eligible WIC-approved foods for savings.

Additions to the updated WIC food plan include:

- *Cash value benefit (on WYO W.E.S.T. card) for fresh fruits and vegetables
- *Baby food (vegetables and fruits for infants older than 6 months and meats for fully breastfed infants)
- *Milk substitutes including cheese and soy beverages
- *Canned legumes/beans
- *Whole grain products including cereals, bread, oatmeal and brown rice
- *Salmon for fully breastfeeding women

Under the new food plan, there were reductions in infant formula amounts, as well as eggs, milk and juice. Juice for infants, cereal for infants 4-5 months old and whole milk for children over age 2 were eliminated.

"The goal of the WIC program and our staff in Wyoming is to make a difference both today and tomorrow by helping our participants develop life-long healthy habits," Moran said.

"The feedback from our moms has been positive," she continued. "They're saying things like 'Wow! We can get bread,' 'We use rice a lot; this is great,' and 'I especially like the fresh fruits and vegetables.'"

WIC participants specifically include pregnant women, post partum women, breastfeeding women, infants and children up to age five. WIC also serves homeless women and children under special regulations. For families to be eligible, income levels must be at or below 185 percent of the U.S. Poverty Income Guidelines. Women and children who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, also known as Food Stamps), Wyoming EqualityCare (Medicaid), and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF, also known as POWER) programs are automatically eligible for WIC.

With 19 local agencies and 18 outreach clinics in Wyoming, WIC serves approximately 13,250 women and children around the state. For more information, contact a local WIC office or the WIC state office at (307) 777-7494.

####